

Montana Society of Pathologists

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EXHIBIT

DATE

HB

February 5, 2007

Dear Honorable House Human Services Committee Members:

I am writing to oppose House Bill No. 359, section 1 (laboratory testing at an individual's request).

This bill essentially mandates that direct access testing (as it is referred to in the laboratory community) for all non-invasive medical laboratory tests become available in Montana. It forces laboratories and health care providers to allow people with no medical training or experience to order tests. These may be tests that are not needed, which leads to unnecessary costs. If there are abnormal results, the person may not recognize the threat or seek appropriate medical care, and responsibility for an adverse outcome may then fall on the providing laboratory or health care provider. Untrained people ordering tests often have no idea how to interpret the results. In my area, even limited menu testing has met with resistance from medical practitioners, who are flooded with calls from patients who have questions about how to interpret the test results they get.

As you know, there are many states that completely prohibit direct access testing. Montana is a state that so far has been silent on the issue. Some laboratories in the state are providing direct access testing from a limited menu to provide patients with convenience, cost savings and some control over their own healthcare. The laboratories themselves may accept the responsibility for limited tests, but this responsibility should not be mandated.

Proper ordering and interpretation of medical laboratory tests requires extensive training and education, as does prescribing medications and treatments. It appropriately should remain in the scope of practicing medicine. I urge you to oppose this bill for the safety and benefit of the residents of the state of Montana.

Respectfully,



Bradley R. Peterson, M.D.
Pathology Consultants of Western Montana
President, Montana Pathology Society